

**To:** Jennifer Catechis[jaconn@msn.com]  
**Cc:** Vela, Austin[Vela.Austin@epa.gov]; Angela Ramirez[angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov]; Stoddard, Andrew[andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov]; Mason, Graham[graham.mason@mail.house.gov]; Ben Ray Lujan[benraylujan@me.com]; sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov[sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov]  
**From:** Gray, David  
**Sent:** Fri 8/7/2015 9:22:41 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Inquiry

## **STATEMENT - Gold King Mine Release Emergency Response**

On August 5, 2015, EPA was conducting an investigation of the Gold King Mine. The intent of the investigation was to assess the on-going water releases from the mine and to treat mine water and to assess the feasibility of further mine remediation. The plan was to excavate the loose material that had collapsed into the cave entry back to the timbering. During the excavation, the loose material gave way, opening the adit (mine tunnel) and spilling the water stored behind the collapsed material into Cement Creek, a tributary of the Animas River.

Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately one million gallons of water (estimated from the dimensions of the mine adit) that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

The large pulse of water dissipated in about an hour. Today the water in Cement Creek and the Animas River in Silverton is clearing. The adit is still discharging lower flows into Cement Creek. Today, EPA is rebuilding settling ponds to treat theseflows – the upper pond will be completed by early afternoon, and the lower pond by COB or early tomorrow. EPA will treat the mine water diverted to the ponds with caustic soda and flocculent once the ponds are built.

We expect conditions will continue to improve in the coming hours and days. As of 10 am today the leading edge of the plume was at 8 miles, as the crow flies (not river miles), from the New Mexico state line. We expect an update on that location later this afternoon. We will continue to coordinate with local, state, tribal and federal officials.

EPA 's ASPECT (Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology) arrived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, last evening to fuel up, and completed a preliminary overflights to determine how far downstream the release has gotten. The flight crew flew this morning from the New Mexico border to the mine to take photographs. The flight crew will fly the river again this afternoon.

EPA is coordinating with ATSDR in response to public health concerns/questions associated with the mine waste plume. ATSDR has been in communication with local health officials at San Juan County Basin Health Department in Colorado. Public health questions/concerns should be directed to Chris Poulet, ATSDR/R8 at 303-312-7013.

EPA Region 8 has been coordinating with Region 6 and Region 9 and the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and the Southern Ute Tribe. Region 6 is working closely with the New Mexico Environment Department to evaluate possible impacts in New Mexico. Potentially impacted water systems have been notified and precautions are in place to ensure drinking water in homes is protected. EPA and NMED are providing assistance to community water systems and closely monitoring the situation.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 7, 2015, at 3:56 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

Thank (4:00 pm, mst).

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S® 6 edge, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: "Gray, David" <[gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)>

Date: 08/07/2015 2:54 PM (GMT-07:00)

To: Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)>

Cc: "Vela, Austin" <[Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov)>, Angela Ramirez

<[angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov)>, "Stoddard, Andrew"

<[andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov)>, "Mason, Graham"

<[graham.mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:graham.mason@mail.house.gov)>, Ben Ray Lujan <[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com)>,

<[sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov](mailto:sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov)>

Subject: Re: Inquiry

Let's keep a call

**Nonresponsive Conference Code**

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 7, 2015, at 3:51 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

If not a call can we arrange a call for our office so that we can get some answers and know what was conveyed to the Senator's offices?

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S® 6 edge, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: "Gray, David" <[gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)>  
Date: 08/07/2015 2:49 PM (GMT-07:00)  
To: Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)>  
Cc: "Vela, Austin" <[Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov)>, Angela Ramirez  
<[angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov)>, "Stoddard, Andrew"  
<[andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov)>, "Mason, Graham"  
<[graham.mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:graham.mason@mail.house.gov)>, Ben Ray Lujan <[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com)>,  
[sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov](mailto:sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov)  
Subject: Re: Inquiry

Yes. It may not be a call but written update.  
I will know shortly.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 7, 2015, at 3:44 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

Can we get that number?

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From: [gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)  
To: [jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)  
CC: [Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov); [angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov);  
[andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov); [graham.mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:graham.mason@mail.house.gov);  
[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com); [sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov](mailto:sisy.garcia@mail.house.gov)  
Subject: Re: Inquiry  
Date: Fri, 7 Aug 2015 20:41:19 +0000

Yes. We are planning an update for 5 pm CDT today .

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 7, 2015, at 3:27 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

David,

Can you tell me when the next Congressional briefing will be? I anticipate that as more is learned there will be a greater need for our offices to stay in contact. Thank you.

Jennifer

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From: [gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)  
To: [jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)  
CC: [Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov); [angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov);  
[andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:andrew.stoddard@mail.house.gov); [graham.mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:graham.mason@mail.house.gov);  
[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com)  
Subject: Re: Inquiry  
Date: Fri, 7 Aug 2015 18:50:50 +0000

I just saw your note . You are welcome on any call. I will make sure to add you.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 7, 2015, at 12:51 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

David,

I just learned that you are conducting a conference call with the State Senators offices on this issue. May we join in the call?

Jennifer

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From: [gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)  
To: [jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)  
CC: [Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov); [angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov);  
[Andrew.Stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:Andrew.Stoddard@mail.house.gov); [Graham.Mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:Graham.Mason@mail.house.gov);  
[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com)

Subject: Re: Inquiry  
Date: Fri, 7 Aug 2015 11:24:01 +0000

Hi Jennifer,

Here is an update for you.

Gold King Mine Spill

08/06/2015

Region 6 is coordinating with the State of New Mexico (NMED) and with EPA Region 8 (who has jurisdiction over Colorado) to obtain background samples on the Animas River before the plume enters the State of New Mexico. EPA collected background samples at the first accessible point in New Mexico and near the first drinking water intake in New Mexico.

The plume is traveling at approximately 4 miles per hour. The **estimated** arrival time for the plume at the first drinking water intake in New Mexico (Aztec) is 8:00 PM Mountain Time yesterday.

According to NMED there are seven drinking water intakes on the Animas River, all have been notified. The Town of Aztec, NM closed their water intakes at 6:00 PM (August 5). The Town of Farmington, NM closed their water intakes at 10:30 AM (August 6).

NMED has notified the Navajo Department of Water Resources.

David

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 6, 2015, at 10:52 PM, Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)> wrote:

David,

Thank you for the quick response. Is there anything specific being done for the residents of New Mexico? Is there a toll free number that they can call vs. the out of state number? When does EPA anticipate getting into New Mexico to assess damages and impact? Any idea what kind of assistance will be available to those impacted? Sorry for all the questions but I thought I might get a few of the basics out of the way to start. Again thank you for your timely response.

Jennifer Catechis

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S® 6 edge, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: "Gray, David" <[gray.david@epa.gov](mailto:gray.david@epa.gov)>  
Date: 08/06/2015 9:36 PM (GMT-07:00)  
To: Jennifer Catechis <[jaconn@msn.com](mailto:jaconn@msn.com)>, "Vela, Austin" <[Vela.Austin@epa.gov](mailto:Vela.Austin@epa.gov)>, Angela Ramirez <[angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov](mailto:angela.ramirez@mail.house.gov)>, "Stoddard, Andrew" <[Andrew.Stoddard@mail.house.gov](mailto:Andrew.Stoddard@mail.house.gov)>, "Mason, Graham" <[Graham.Mason@mail.house.gov](mailto:Graham.Mason@mail.house.gov)>, Ben Ray Lujan <[benraylujan@me.com](mailto:benraylujan@me.com)>  
Subject: Inquiry

Hi,

Austin shared your email with me. I am happy to share what I know at this point in time. We have been in close communication with NMED Secretary Flynn and our colleagues in Region 8 where the spill originated. Forgive the typos I am on my iPhone.

David Gray  
Director  
External and Government Affairs

EPA  
214.789.2619 cell

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Flannery O'Neil, MPH  
Health Planner and Communications Director  
San Juan Basin Health Department  
(970)335-2087  
[www.sjbhd.org](http://www.sjbhd.org)<<http://www.sjbhd.org>><<http://www.sjbhd.org>>

From: Sarah Jacobson [mailto:[Sarah.Jacobson@co.laplata.co.us](mailto:Sarah.Jacobson@co.laplata.co.us)]  
Sent: Thursday, August 6, 2015 4:19 PM  
To: [rcorkish@gmail.com](mailto:rcorkish@gmail.com)<mailto:[rcorkish@gmail.com](mailto:rcorkish@gmail.com)><mailto:[rcorkish@gmail.com](mailto:rcorkish@gmail.com)>;  
Flannery O'Neil  
<[foneil@sjbhd.org](mailto:foneil@sjbhd.org)<mailto:[foneil@sjbhd.org](mailto:foneil@sjbhd.org)><mailto:[foneil@sjbhd.org](mailto:foneil@sjbhd.org)>>>  
Subject: News Release - Sheriff Order to Close Animas River

Effective Thursday, August 6, 2015 at 3:00 p.m., La Plata County Sheriff Sean Smith issued an order pursuant to CRS 33-13-111 and 112, closing the Animas River to all watercraft including canoes, kayaks, tubes, rafts and other flotation devices from the north County line (San Juan County, Colorado) to the south County line (at the Colorado/New Mexico State line) until further notice. Furthermore, all such watercraft must be removed from the Animas River within the locations cited above.

“This decision was made in the interest of public health after consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Colorado Department of Health and Environment, San Juan Basin Health Department and representatives of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe,” advised Sheriff Sean Smith. “This Order shall remain in effect until it is determined that the river is safe. EPA test results of the Animas River are expected within 24-48 hours, and the Order will be re-evaluated at that time.”

The City of Durango and La Plata County Sheriff's Office are posting notices along the Animas River to notify citizens.

A Call Center has been set up for the public at 970-385-8700. As additional information is received, it will be posted to the La Plata County website at <http://www.co.laplata.co.us/emergency>, San Juan Basin Health Department’s Website at [www.sjbhd.org](http://www.sjbhd.org)<<http://www.sjbhd.org>><<http://www.sjbhd.org>>, La Plata County Government Facebook and San Juan Basin Health

Department Facebook.

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### **August 6 EPA Statement on Gold King Mine Release**

Yesterday, an EPA team working to investigate and address contamination at the Gold King Mine in San Juan County, Colo. unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately 1M gallons of water that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

Following the release, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment notified water users downstream so they could take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes.

The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River. The water associated with the release is obvious and highly discolored. As a precaution, EPA recommends that recreational users of the Animas River avoid contact with or use of the river until the pulse of mine water passes. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users. EPA will also be assessing damage near the mine portal and any residual releases of water at the mine site.

Sent from my iPhone

